

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-19

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 09150

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM, NATO, UK

SUBJECT: MBFR: CONVERSATIONS WITH BRITISH OFFICIALS

1. SUMMARY: BRITISH OFFICIALS IN FCO AND MOD REPORT THAT MBFR ACTIVITY IN HMG IS NOW AT A LOW EBB IN ANTICIPATION OF SUMMER RECESS. BUT THEY BELIEVE WESTERN PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO PHASE TWO AND NUCLEAR PROBLEMS. MOD OFFICIAL PREDICTED THAT UK DEFENSE REVIEW RESULTS WILL FORCE UK INTO POSITION OF "INSISTING" ON PHASE TWO PARTICIPATION VICE CURRENT POSITION OF "BEING WILLING TO PARTICIPATE". END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 17 WE DISCUSSED MBFR WITH MCLAREN OF FCO AND MAYNE OF MOD IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS. BOTH COMMENTED THAT HMG ACTIVITY ON MBFR IS AT A LOW EBB WITH APPROACH OF SUMMER RECESS -- IN FACT BOTH LEAVING ON MONTH-LONG HOLIDAYS BEGINNING JULY 20. BUT BOTH ALSO SAID THAT WESTERN PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE TO DO SOME HARD THINKING ABOUT MBFR -- AND IN PARTICULAR PHASE TWO AND NUCLEAR

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OPTION PROBLEMS -- BEFORE RESUMPTION OF TALKS.

3. PHASE TWO CONSIDERATIONS. MCLAREN FELT THAT THE NEGOTIATING PROBLEM MAY FORCE WESTERN SIDE TO LOOK AT THE IDEA OF GIVING UP TWO-PHASE CONCEPT. IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE RUSSIANS WILL INSIST ON SOME ALL PARTICIPANTS FORMULA THAT MAY REQUIRE US TO AT LEAST FUZZ OUR TWO-PHASE APPROACH. IN A RELATED COMMENT, MAYNE SAID THAT RESULT OF UK DEFENSE REVIEW WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE SOME EFFECT ON UK FORCES COMMITTED TO NATO. THIS WILL MEAN THAT UK PROBABLY WILL MOVE FROM A POSITION OF CONDITIONAL WILLINGNESS TO REDUCE FORCES UNDER MBFR TO A POSITION OF INSISTING ON PARTICIPATION IN ANY REDUCTION OF EUROPEAN NATO FORCES.

4. NUCLEAR OPTION. NEITHER MCLAREN NOR MAYNE WAS TROUBLED BY THE LACK OF U.S. RESPONSE TO THE MOST RECENT UK/FRG PAPER ON THE NUCLEAR OPTION IN MBFR. THEY BOTH UNDERSTOOD THAT THE U.S. WILL HAVE TO THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT NUCLEAR ASPECTS. BUT THEY THOUGHT THAT WE SHOULD MOVE TOWARD AN ALLIED POSITION DURING THE RECESS. MAYNE REPORTED THAT SOME CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN WITHIN HMG TO PROPOSING A US/UK BILATERAL MEETING ON NUCLEAR QUESTION TO TAKE PLACE DURING THE RECESS. WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF THIS FROM OTHER SOURCES.

5. STATUS OF MBFR IN HMG. MCLAREN REPORTED THAT MINISTERS STILL ARE NOT INVOLVED IN MBFR ON A CONTINUING BASIS. FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN HAS RECEIVED ONLY ONE BRIEFING ON MBFR AND THIS WAS MERELY TO ACQUAINT HIM GENERALLY WITH THE SUBJECT. CALLAGHAN'S REACTION WAS THAT UK POLICY ON MBFR WAS ABOUT RIGHT AND THAT IT SHOULD CONTINUE UNTIL CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE REVIEW. AS A RESULT, MBFR ACTION CONTINUES TO REST AT OFFICIAL LEVEL IN FCO AND MOD.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT. MBFR WORK IN LONDON IS SLOWING DOWN FOR SUMMER RECESS IN VIENNA AND FOR HOLIDAYS OF OFFICIALS HERE. BUT WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY SOME FURTHER UK INITIATIVE ON NUCLEAR OPTIONS SOMETIME BEFORE RECESS DRAWS TO A CLOSE. END COMMENT.

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